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NEWS

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For Immediate Release:

EIU TO SPONSOR "STRANGE LIKE ME" – A THEATRICAL WORKSHOP ON DIVERSITY

CHARLESTON – Hate groups are on the rise.

In Texas, an African-American man was dragged to death behind a pick-up truck. In Wyoming, a gay man was beaten and hung on a fence to die. For most of us, it's easy to distance ourselves from events like these and say, "That's not me. I wouldn't do that."

But what about the subtler prejudices that each of us carries? Do we make assumptions about others based on appearance, race, gender, religion or sexual orientation? How do these assumptions effect our ability to really get to know another individual? More importantly, how can we overcome our preconceptions and begin to bridge the gaps that continue to keep people apart?

Since 1995, the Gestic Theatre Company of Chicago has been performing a series of innovative, interactive and entertaining theatrical programs and workshops on issues such as these. And, on Thursday, Feb. 8, one such program will be performed on the campus of Eastern Illinois University.

"Strange Like Me" begins with a monologue that "lays bare the ugliness of hate, setting the stage for a lively discussion of diversity." In two scenes, the audience follows six students as

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Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

they attempt to navigate the “sometimes difficult terrain of multicultural campus relationships.”

During periods known as “talk-backs,” attendees can confront the characters and voice their own opinions on the issues being addressed. As a scene reaches its climax, a moderator – an experienced social worker who travels with the company – stops it. The actors are called back on stage where they remain in character as audience members question them about their behavior and attitudes. The moderator functions much like a television talk show host, encouraging audience participation and responses, and making sure the important points of each scene don't get lost in the excitement.

These “talk-back” sessions can take up more than half of the program's running time, and often lead to dialogue through which audience members learn more about themselves and each other.

The public is invited to join EIU students, faculty and staff during this event, being sponsored in commemoration of Eastern's African-American Heritage Celebration 2001. Admission to the program, scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. Thursday in the Grand Ballroom of the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union, is \$1 for the general public, free to EIU students with ID.

“Strange Like Me” is being sponsored by University Board Lectures. Additional information on the program and the Gestic Theatre Company can be found on the web at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/gestic/index.html>.